

Halloween

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What is Halloween about for followers of Jesus, the Lord of Life? Let's explore this holiday ("holy day") and then choose from a variety of fun activities.

For

Just for Kids

Season

Fall

Needed

"Interesting Things to Know About Halloween" (page 3, below); all other items are optional, including: internet connection; apples, apple peeler, caramel, popcorn; a pumpkin, carving tools, and either a candle or LCD candle; gingerbread man/woman cookie (along with frosting and other cookie decorations); posterboard, markers, stickers, stapler or tape.

Activity Plan

1. Say this prayer to begin. Or, you might want to speak words from your own heart, or simply be silent for a moment.

"God of Life and Death and Life-Beyond-Death: thank you for special times of celebration and remembrance. Thank you for being with me always. I especially thank you for being with me right now. Amen."

2. Read "Interesting Things to Know About Halloween" on page 3, below.
3. Now that you have read "Interesting Things About Halloween" below, you see how October 31 (Halloween) and November 1 (All Saints Day) are days of both death *and* life. (We can also include November 2 if we are talking about Day of the Dead.)

We are followers of Jesus, who died once, and now lives forever. The following activities provide ways to honor those who have died, while also giving us the chance to have fun as we celebrate life! Choose one or more activities to do on your own or with someone else.

- Since Halloween occurs at the end of the harvest season in the northern hemisphere, celebrate the harvest by eating some traditional "fall foods." Popcorn or caramel apples are great choices. It would also be fun to have an apple-peeling contest: see who can peel an apple with the longest unbroken peel. (You decide on the prize!)
- With the help of an adult, carve a pumpkin. (Pumpkins are a "fall food," too.) Begin by cutting off the top of the pumpkin and scooping out the inside. As you scoop out the flesh and seeds, say this prayer to God: "I ask you to empty me of anything that keeps me from experiencing your love." I wonder what sometimes keeps you from experiencing God's love? Perhaps anger, or impatience, or being selfish?

Now with an adult's help, carve a face onto your pumpkin. It can be funny, spooky, or whatever you want! Once the pumpkin is emptied out, get permission to put a candle inside (or use an LED candle). As you light the candle, pray, "Fill me with the light of Christ."

- Decorate a gingerbread man (or a gingerbread woman) cookie, in honor of a family member or friend who has died. As you decorate your cookie, perhaps you can name two things that you miss about that person.
- The Bible talks about saints wearing crowns when they are in heaven. So let's make a crown! Cut a strip of posterboard, at least 2" high and 22" long. If you'd like to add some pointed tips or other interesting cut-out shapes to your crown, ask an adult to help you. Decorate your crown with markers, stickers, or anything else you have on hand. When you are finished, have someone help you fit it around your head. (Staple or tape the crown so that it's the right size.)



Interesting Things to Know about Halloween

- ❖ Halloween is celebrated on October 31. Not all cultures celebrate Halloween.
- ❖ By the 7th century (we are now in the 21st century), November 1st became known to Christians as "All Saints Day." On All Saints Day, Christians gave special honor to those followers of Jesus who had died. All Saints Day is a time to remember that nothing—not even death!—can separate us from God's love.
- ❖ In the northern hemisphere, celebrating All Saints Day (Nov. 1) in the fall is a great way to celebrate life, because this can be a time of year that feels "dark," or maybe sad. Why does it feel sad? Maybe because the days grow shorter and cooler and because the harvest season is ending. Some trees are losing their leaves, and the landscape can take on a "shivery" or "spooky" feeling.
- ❖ The word "Halloween" comes from "Hallows Eve." Before people used the words "All Saints Day," they used the phrase "All Hallows Day" to speak about the same thing. To "hallow" something is to honor it, to consider it holy. (You might know the word "hallowed" from the Lord's Prayer, where we say, "Hallowed be thy name...") On "Hallows Eve" (October 31) people would get ready for All Hallows Day or All Saints Day on November 1.
- ❖ There are many different explanations for some of the Halloween traditions we know today. Many of the traditions are tied to the beliefs and practices of the Celtic people in ancient Europe. The Celts (pronounced "Kelts") viewed October 31 as their New Year's Eve, and believed that spirits from the dead roamed the earth on that night. (Maybe now you see why some people dress up as ghosts today!) Some people would leave food ("treats") for the spirits. Some people dressed up in strange costumes to try to confuse the spirits.
- ❖ Your family or some of your friends may celebrate another holiday that occurs at this time of year, called "Day of the Dead." Its roots are in the country of Mexico. Day of the Dead is celebrated on November 1 and 2. On these days people remember those who have died by creating altars (or "offerings") that contain mementos from the person's life, as well as a variety of special foods and flowers. To learn more about Day of the Dead, look at this YouTube video from the Travel Channel: [Day of the Dead](#).

